

Breckenridge Comment and WDFW Response on Welts Property Restoration

Mr. Breckenridge,

Thank you for submitting your comments regarding the proposed Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project.

I understand that you are concerned with several issues regarding how the property is currently managed, and suggest eliminating public access on the property. The SEPA permit application to which we are seeking comments is for the proposed wetland restoration project. Your comments suggesting eliminating public access relate to how the property is currently managed, which is not intended to be modified as a result of this project. Concerns with how the property is managed will be addressed in a forum separate from comment periods associated with permit applications for this wetland restoration project. To begin to answer some of the questions we are commonly asked about the property, we have drafted a FAQ sheet, which is attached.

I understand that you are concerned that property is not currently managed in a way that is beneficial to wildlife, and that there is a noxious weed problem on the property. An objective of the proposed project is to restore habitat and wetland hydrology on the site to conditions that are more natural than its current state. Restoration of wetlands is widely considered to benefit wildlife that depend on these habitats, including waterfowl. Restoring wetland hydrology and planting native vegetation proposed in this project will also likely reduce noxious weeds on the property. Noxious weeds that WDFW currently manages on the site prefer the drier, fallow field conditions that are currently present on the property.

I understand that you are concerned that the location of the parking area will negatively impact eagles. Through the permit process, agencies with jurisdiction will assess environmental impacts of the proposal and will require changes to the project design if they deem necessary, prior to issuing permits.

I understand you are concerned that there is no port-a-potty on the property. As part of this project, a turn-around pad will be constructed in the NE corner of the property that will accommodate a port-a-potty seasonally, as needed.

Thank for your comments, and please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Loren

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From: Tony Breckenridge [<mailto:branthunt@hotmail.com>]
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Subject: FW: weltz

My name is Tony Breckenridge. I was one of the property owners that attended the public meeting in Bayview a couple months ago regarding the Weltz property proposal.

Of every person at the meeting there were only two people who spoke in support of the project. Both, who spoke in support of your project, do not live next to the Weltz property. Each and every person that spoke against your Weltz Property Proposal was a neighbor. Every neighbor to the Weltz property also spoke against the Weltz Property management by the WDFW.

First, this parcel does not fit into the existing West 90. (That is about 400 to 500 acres on Samish Island Rd) The West 90 is a large parcel that the State owns and is used for recreation. The WDFW would be better served by saving money and buying property that is adjacent to the West 90. This Weltz property is too small to accommodate waterfowl hunters. It is impossible to shoot from any area on the Weltz property and not have shotgun shot landing on adjacent property. Over the years every adjacent property owner had had unwanted pellets raining on their residences and property. Also there is a county road that borders the property. The shot pellets are continually hitting the road. Before we talked WDFW into putting in a Safety Zone, the waterfowl hunters would stand about 30 yards from the county road and the residences and shoot back towards the road and houses. Now they stand back about 100 yards and are still raining pellets on the road and houses.

When they hunt on the dike, next to the Samish River the Hunters come unprepared to retrieve ducks and geese on the river. The waterfowl get wounded or killed in the Samish River and the Hunters usually do not have dogs or a skiff - so the birds never get retrieved.

Now you want to promote waterfowl hunting in an area that is not suitable for hunting. You want to put in a walking path for both bird watchers and hunters in the same field. The first time a bird watcher walks out and scares the waterfowl from coming in, an unethical hunter is going to fire a warning shot over the head of the bird watcher. The same type of thing happened with the West 90 when you tried mixing waterfowl hunting with pheasant hunting. Guys in camo hunting with guys in orange. It didn't work.

This Weltz property has been very convenient for trespassers. They enter the WDFW property and sneak onto the adjoining property. The property owner to the south is Mrs. Sullivan. I have personally replaced her "no trespassing" signs over 25 times. WDFW likes to post signs that show you are entering State Lands, but never post the end of the State Land saying "End of State Land, no trespassing."

In your proposal you are not specific on what types of wildlife you are trying to enhance. The NRCS plan is to promote the enhancement of wildlife. The WDFW is trying to encourage the killing of wildlife. Which is it? If waterfowl is your plan, you have over the years done a very poor job of enhancing waterfowl. Before WDFW/NRCS, I planted crops for waterfowl on this same property and had thousands of ducks and geese coming into the field. It was one of the best wintering areas for waterfowl. Now I see lots of waterfowl flying over the field, but none

landing and staying. Additionally, the property has been mismanaged and is full of noxious weeds that spread to the neighboring properties.

The only way to encourage wildlife to stay on the Weltz property is to keep people from walking on the property. With the very large number of birders in the Samish area, I could never see a time during the fall and winter that the property and wildlife would ever get a "resting time." The property is small enough that all the observation should be done from the edge of the property. Something that should be taken into consideration is the famous "Edison Eagle Tree" that will end up being across the road from your parking lot. There are up to 35 eagles that rest in that tree daily. With your parking area so close to that tree, what will the impact be on the resting eagles?

WDFW had never taken an active part in managing the hundreds of fisherman that impact the Samish River. Every property owner has had to deal with the Wa. DOE, for either septic tanks or livestock in the water shed. The Governor had made a high priority to clean up the pollutants in Samish Bay. On this Weltz property the WDFW doesn't supply Port a potties. They may have at one time, but certainly did not during this past Salmon season. Every day I see fisherman urinating and defecating in and near the waterway. This is every day by numerous people. WDFW is the worst polluter for Samish Bay. I could go on for two more pages about the mismanagement of the Weltz property and fisherman, but I will spare you.

In recap, this is the worst managed piece of property that WDFW has. It is not suitable for the intended purposes. There is no adjoining property owner in favor of WDFW managing it. WDFW needs to surplus the property and sell it off.

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